## The Strange Cases of Magnum, Scientific Consultant Max Rittenberg

66 ST you five thousand," snap- butler. ped Magnum brusquely.

"Five thousand pounds for a

"No, not pounds-guineas."

"But that's preposterous!" Magnum pointedly turned his back

"Got that combustion analysis finished?"

From twenty yards a diffident, almos inaudible voice murmured something about "only the weighing of the CO2 bulbs."

"Hurry!" shouted Magnum, and client with rather the air of a schoolmentary proposition in geometry for the fifteenth time to a particularly arrangements." dense dunderhead.

Magnum knew his own value as a scientific consultant, and had none of the usual scientist's modesty about him. His manner was brusque and rough-edged to the point of boorishness, and no one would have put up with such incivility had it not been for his infernal cleverness in his special field. In the City of London he stood as the undisputed head of his profession. In age he was anywhere from forty to fifty; in appearance he was lean and wiry and as hard as nails, with a straggling mustache and short beard of a sandy red, and a be safer to say a week." huge bald head covered with knobs and bumps like the bare, stony summit of a kopje. He acknowledged no Magnum, like a peer or prince. He with his wife and family. front name-called and signed himself was a bachelor with a dwelling place behind, eyed Magnum with considersomewhere on the Plumstead marshes.

Turning to his visitor, Sir Julian Boyd, he sketched out the situation with a series of taps on the table from the horn spatula he held in his

"You and your family are suffering You've consulted doctors and they gastric pains-

and pass his hand feelingly over his fact, it amounted to this ample lower waistcoat.

-and if you don't trace the source of the trouble, you'll soon be ordering your coffins. If it's not worth five thousand guineas to you to have tating a day or two in bed, and at the problem cleared up, you put a other times slight and transitory. At cheap value on your health."

the mystery?"

"If the problem's solvable, I'll solve the family, but none of the servants, it. If I take up your case, my repuantee could you have?" demanded Magnum truculently.

Sir Julian caved in before this brusque authoritativeness. "Very well," said he. "I put the case in Young Boyd perked up at this sugyour hands."

Coutts'," he replied, for he made it a lengthily that the idea was unthinkbusiness rule to get his fees in ad- able. Continuing with the facts:

are detached and surrounded by a turbing symptoms continued. garden. In the buying of it, he had had a spirited auction duel with a Cardiff colliery owner who also want- Similarly with the liqueurs. ed the site for his town residence. Boyd, bringing up financial guns from the Kimberly diamond field, splendid mansion.

ing with the young fellow whose dif- ness. He edged around behind Mag- lar to roof, Magnum striding ahead them. fident voice had answered something num, his pillar of protection. -was his chief's right hand. Mag- ready to depart. Magnum strode out the articles examined. He was con- ine work."

ribly if he had to make conversation whom he wished to cross-examine. graduate student, he had written a "We have to eliminate everything

The taxi conveying them arrrived that some one had a grudge against including the remnants of the Boyd Some poison might be dropped into at Sir Julian's house when the fam- the family and wanted to poison meal, which by his orders had been the milk for the family table. We ily-husband, wife, two grown-up them all, daughters a nearly grown-up sonwere at dinner.

"Ask Mr. Magnum to wait in the library for a quarter of an hour,"

the evening papers." "Tell Sir Julian that I must see thought perhaps-

him at once," said Magnum to the

Boyd came to the library, dusting some bread crumbs off his ample waistcoat, decidedly on his dignity at consulting fee!" exclaimed his visitor, this ill-mannered interruption.

"What is this important matter?" he demanded.

"I want you and your family to and called loudly through an open leave the house now," returned Magnum authoritatively. door into his range of private labora-

"We're in the middle of dinner." "I know. So much the better. Leave the meal as it is and go off to some hotel."

"Unheard of!"

"But not impossible." "You presume, sir!"

"When I take up a case, I expect a free hand. I want an empty house then turned again to his prospective left just as it is. The servants are master about to demonstrate an eleto parade before me, and then go off

"Leave the house empty?"

"Yes. You're insured against burglary, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"Then where's the difficulty?" "It's unheard of."

"So is your poisoning problem. An unheard-of case requires unheard-of methods."

Sir Julian was impressed, in spite of his anoyance at being interrupted in the middle of a sacred meal.

"Leave for how long?" he asked. "Say a week. I may be able to solve the problem in a day, but it'll

."I'll consult with my wife," conceded Boyd, and presently, like a shepherd with his flock, he returned

Young Boyd, trailing mutinously able hostility, found the return gaze disconcerting, and switched his look of displeasure on to Meredith, who wilted under it.

Sir Julian made a cursory introduction of visitors to family, and Lady Boyd took the word, explaining from a mysterious form of poisoning. symptoms and suspicions at great length. She was a thin, colorless little can't place it. You've had the water woman, with a thin, colorless voice analyzed, the milk analyzed, the that went trailing on interminably like whole of your food analyzed. Noth- a lump of insipid sweet stuff pulled ing found wrong with them. Mean- out by a butter-cream machine. An while you're all tied up with these ounce of fact served with her to make a whole soup tureen of conver-Sir Julian did at that moment wince sation. Distilling out the ounce of

Gastric pains, dizziness and sick headache on awakening in the morning. Varied most erratically, being sometimes very severe and necessithe present time there was a lull. "But would you guarantee to solve Next week it might be virulent again. Attacked all the members of

with the one exception of the housetation's at stake. What better guar- keeper. Applied only to the housewhen they went elsewhere the trouble vanished.

> "Then why not give up the house?" Magnum had interjected.

gestion, but indignation depicted it-Magnum passed him pen and ink. self on the countenance of Sir Julian "Cross the check to my bank- and Lady Boyd. She explained

Analysis had given a clean bill of health to the water, the milk and all Sir Julian Boyd's town house oc- the food examined. She had tried cupied a most desirable position fa- changing the milkman, the grocer, cing Hyde Park. It was one of the and the baker. She had dismissed

"The wine?" queried Magnum

"Tea and coffee?" Had also been analyzed.

him blushing, they continued the ocu-Magnum drove there in the even- lar attacks with minx-like malicious-

The young fellow was very shy, sure that nothing suspicious was be- ed with an inordinately keen sense of fellow knows!" very modest, very diffident-stam- ing carried away from the house, smell. In his early days, before he "But wouldn't the servants be mering and stuttering if he had to Then he dismissed them, with the ex- had started out as a scientific consult- drinking the same milk as the famspeak to a client, and blushing bor- ception of the prim housekeeper, ant and was merely a university post- ily?"

with a woman. He looked up to Her symptoms, as she described monograph on odors. Magnum as a master, a protector, and them, corresponded closely to the He employed his sense of smell on cause they don't get the symptoms. family symptoms. She suspected every food substance in the house, But that doesn't affect my point.

"Who?" demanded Magnum. She would rather not say, sir. "Speak out," thundered Magnum.

said Boyd to his butler. "Give him had had a "follower," a soldier, whom mystery. He had hoped to earn his Lady Boyd disapproved of. She five thousand guineas by a couple of my part of the work."

## The Cyanogen Affair

emptuously, and dismissed her. The family went to make their own engage rooms and have a commisionaire sent to see to their trunks.

"Rubbish!" said Magnum con-plazy week in the Boyd mansion for cigar, burying himself deep in the sake of appearances.

Now, the mystery seemed by no

thought.

An hour later, he roused himself

cult analysis of the complex combustion products of tobacco. The case

But the housekeeper? Why was she attacked by the symptoms? That ness, and in each case could only rewas the only fly in the deductional ointment. Was it possible that the of anything unusual." prim housekeeper smoked her mas-

ter's cigars on the sly?

For a whole day and the greater part of a night Magnum superintendpart of a night shagnam superintended impatiently the meticulously careful and painstaking work of his subordinate, lending a practical hand now and again, but leaving all delicate operations to the young Welshloids were neatly distilled off, sepa-rated and identified. But they reveal-

pains had gradually worn off. Magnum, angry at the negative result of the analysis, took a couple of cigars

Take a cold shower bath. We must rough-and-ready offices in a chronic analyze those cigars. Hurry!" replied state of disorder, a huge, double-storied library of scientific literature, and garrets packed with reserves of experimental apparatus. In the back Magnum's private laboratories in the wall was a locked door leading to the

city, and started to work on the diffi-Air analysis is a particularly tediseemed clear now. Sir Julian smok-ed; so would young Boyd. Lady ples to investigate. Magnum could Boyd and the daughters would get barely keep his temper under control as for three days on end the young Welshman worked on them, one after another, with his meticulous careful-

> "Must be!" retorted Magnum. "Too small in quantity to trace this way. Get fresh samples and analyze on the J. J. Thomson method." This is a highly delicate game which

> involves the playing of cushion can-nons with atoms far smaller than any microscope can detect. Meredith was one of the very few men who have mastered the technique of the game. But the J. J. Thomson method yielded no result beyond what would happen with normal air.

> Magnum was now thoroughly been wasted. If he did not solve the mystery inside the seven days he had stipulated for, his reputation would be seriously damaged. Food and drink had been put out of court; cigars had been proved innocent; air was found "not proven." Then what in blazes could have produced the symptoms from which he and Meredith, as well as the Boyd family, had so unmistakably suffered? The two investigators went back

to Park lane.
"We must reconstruct that first night in the house," said Magnum, after he had examined the library and bedrooms and been exasperated their mocking stare at his puzzle-ment. "We sat there, in armchairs, each side of the fire. We—I smoked two cigars. The windows were exactly as they are now. The door-yes, the door was closed."

He went to make up the fire, found the coalbox empty, and with Meredith by him proceeded to the cellars in search of fresh coal and kindling The coal cellar was divided into three compartments.

"Low-grade stuff. That would be kitchen coal," said Magnum decisively, pointing to the first compartment. Now why these other two divisions: Ah, I see. Lady Boyd makes a rich woman's economy by burning the best coal in her own living rooms and bedrooms, and giving an inferior grade for her servants' use." Suddenly he wheeled around and

slapped Meredith on the back with tartling force. "Got it!" he cried exultantly.

The young fellow rubbed his narrow houlder feelingly as he answered: "I don't see what you mean."
"The coal! Something poisonous in

the coal. We sat over there for hours. So do the Boyds. the housekeeper? objected

Magnum snatched up a lump from the third bin-a high-grade Welsh anthracite coal-and hurried upstairs wit it to the housekeeper's sitting-room It was as he expected. The housekeeper, by virtue of her exalted position in the hierarchy of servants, was allowed to share the family's special coal. Now to collect samples and take them to the laboratories for analysis.

lowing day to Sir Julian Boyd, received the family in the hall of the Park lane secret of nature is hidden. He had hanged for the occasion into a respectable tidy suit of clothes, and carried no traces of his week's feverish day-andnight work.

Magnum, having telephoned the fol-

"You have really and truly found out the mystery?" asked Lady Boyd. Yes, and the remedy." "What is it?"

"Change your coal dealer,"
"Why?"

"The special coal you burn has been off evanogen gas when the coal's

"Cyanide-you mean pru-sic acid?" ejaculated the startled Sir Julian. "No, not cyanide-cyanogen," returned Magnum impatiently.

"It's poisonous?" "Yes, in sufficient quantity, Under the actual conditions of burning, only

minute traces come out from the grate goes up When you sit close to the fire, you in hale those minute traces. Even air analysis wouldn't show the presence of cyanogen unless a sample were taken from in front of the burning fire. Even

"But I've never heard of coal being "Nor have I. This coal has been doctored by some "Whose coal is it?" asked Sir Julian

"It comes from the Pen-y-Clyd Col-"We have always dealt with them in

"But that's Llewellyn's colliery!" the blazed out Sir Julian.

It was now Magnum's turn to be

"Who's Llewellyn?" he demanded. "And where does he come in?"
"The man who tried to buy the

sale! He wanted it for his own town house. Is it possible that he would go so far as to try and poison myself and my family? "Everything's possible,"

"Well, that depends on the point of view. I was looking at the scientific aspect," answered Magnum. In his inner thoughts, he was remem-

bering that this Llewellyn had com-pletely mystified him-Magnum, the



"I want you and your family to leave the house now."

very few houses in Park Lane which several of the servants. Still the dis- self with details of that kind, now leigar cabinet near, he helped himself savagely at the fire, and returned to them furiously, and lay down to rest sent young Meredith with a handful to a brace of fat and moneyed-look- his thinking. of loose silver to settle the bill and ing cigars. Meredith did not smoke At three in the morning he gave tories. It was all of well-known brands, bring in their own portmanteaus. He -it made him ill. had prepared for their spending a "These analyst's certificates" and the two went up to their bed- quite clear. There were no internal

week in the Park Lane house. By eleven o'clock, the mansion was given him by Sir Julian-"they look The two Misses Boyd began to eye empty save for Magnum and his as- very pretty with the results taken out in broad daylight. Usually he woke Boyd mansion, what in thunder was

Meredith watched him with implicit tificate." Well, sir, the second housemaid after test gave him no clue to the Meredith mildly. hours' work, and then to spend at He began to pull furiously at the

up work, roused the again dozing boy swore vehemently. Magnum flourished a sheaf of papers rooms.

had beaten him down and erected a the shy young Meredith. Seeing sistant, left with a full set of keys. to seven significant figures, but what fresh as a country meadow, no mat- the cause of the sickness and pains? are they worth?" They examined the house from cel- The young Welshman studied keeping. But now his head was thing poisonous in the air of the

lar to roof, Magnum striding ahead them.

"I don't think I should like to trust sick. Down below, sharp pains were ples," he called to Meredith, and the about "CO2 bulbs." This young The butler knocked and entered to er's keys, Meredith following with to them altogether," was his diffident gnawing at him. Welshman-Iver Meredith by name announce that the servants were now eyes fixed more on his chief than on conclusion. "They seem to be rout-

num himself was the organizing brain to the hall, where they were lined up tent to leave the thinking end of the "They are. The usual humbug. and the commercial acumen of the in strict order of precedence, begin- work to Magnum and let his own Look at this item on the milk certifi- mystery. No need to go through the firm, but he was too hasty of tem- ing with the prim housekeeper and mind run fallow until some definite cate: 'Other solids in solution tedious analysis of foods and drinks, perament to be fitted for the detailed ending with the "tweeny" and the analytical task were assigned to him. | nought nought nought point nought because he had neither eaten nor work of scientific analysis, which re- boot boy. Each had his or her bag They investigated pantries and cel- nought four seven grammes.' Other drunk in the house. That eliminated quires the manual technique of a vir- or package of clothes to take away. lars, gas-supply, water-supply, elec- solids!" His voice rang out con- a possible couple of months' work. tuoso pianist and the patience of a Magnum, impervious to hostile looks, tric-light and electric-power arrange- temptuously. "They might be the He had smoked two of Sir Julian's went through every package to make ments. Magnum was naturally gift- poisons of the Borgias for all this

that the servants eat and drink, be- eyes. "I feel very sick," he con-

faith in his powers of deduction; but | "It seems to me that there may be Magnum frowned disgustedly as test months of work ahead of us," said

"We must find short cuts. That's

Magnum woke out of a deep sleep be eliminated from the mystery of the ter what late hours he had been bedrooms: that must be it.

"Splendid!" cried Magnum aloud. They were the Boyd symptoms. He was right on the track of the

He rushed to Mcredith's room and roused the sleeping boy. "How are you feeling?" he demanded.

cigars. Was that the solution?

Meredith rubbed the sleep from his fessed.

"Excellent." "Why?"

smoking Sir Julian's cigars last night Upper Thames street. -you were near me. You got my smoke. See it now?"

"I'm feeling very bad," said the oung fellow dismally.

"Doesn't matter. Rouse yourself, the street, was composed of some

on an improvised couch in the labora-When he awoke in the morning, he

But if food, drink and smokes could The atmosphere of the library or buzzing and he was felling decidely house

> latter obediently vacuumized a dozen Back at the Boyd house, deserted and looking horribly neglected with kitchen, its burned-down fires, its unmade beds and its still curtained windows, Magnum began to sniff atmosphere with a ferocious intensity of sphere with a terocious intensity of purpose, like a wolf scenting the wind. Nothing peculiar tanged his keen sense of smell. He then order-ed Meredith to expose a couple of globes in the library, another in the dining-room, two others in the bedooms belonging to the family and to land away from me the housekeeper. They returned with their atmospheric booty to the laboratories in Upper Thames Street. Magnum kept a show office in

Queen Victoria street, near to the Mansion House, for the benefit of cli-Mansion House, for the benefit of culments. When they entered it, they
were invariably told by a solitary
clerk that Mr. Magnum was away at
the house of the benefit of culthe wanted merely to drive you out to
the house. Get you to sell it off. A
very ingenious scheme."

"A very dastardly scheme, sir!" re"A very dastardly scheme, sir!" remeal, which by his orders had been the milk for the family table. We "So do I. Head buzzing and pains his laboratories or elsewhere. Then allowed to remain in statu quo. can't trust blindly to a humbug cer-shooting about the interior. We've the client would be handed a card both got the symptoms. I was how to get to the uninviting wilds of

A very high, spiked wall, grimy from a hundred years of accumulated soot, enclosed on three sides the ground on which the laboratories had been built. The fourth side, fronting

